

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CU-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 SAM-01 /071 W

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P 091100Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8895

INFO USMISSION USUN PRIORITY

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

LIMITED OFFICAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 3434

CINCPAC FOR POLAD: PASS AMBASSADOR OSBORN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BM, UN

SUBJECT: U THANT'S BURIAL

REF: RANGOON 3423 AND 3418

1. SUMMARY: HUGE CROWDS WHICH TURNED OUT FOR U THANT FUNERAL DECEMBER 8 MOSTLY DISPERSED THAT EVENING, LEAVING A FEW THOUSAND ACTIVISTS, MAINLY STUDENTS AND SOME MONKS, IN POSSESSION OF CAMPUS. ACTIVISTS' ORGANIZATION AND LOGISTICS HAS BEEN IMPRESSIVE SO FAR, BUT COMPLETION OF INTERMENT LEAVES THEM WITH NO CLEAR OBJECTIVE EXCEPT TO HOPE AGAINST HOPE FOR COLLAPSE OF REGIME. ALTHOUGH GUB CAN NO DOUBT REGAIN CONTROL OF CAMPUS AND SUPPRESS UPRISING, ITS REPUTATION FOR POLITICAL CLEVERNESS AND EFFECTIVE SECURITY APPARATUS HAS BEEN BADLY DAMAGED BY EVENTS OF PAST WEEK. THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THAT GUB MAY MOVE SLOWLY IN ON CAMPUS AS POPULAR INTEREST RECEDES. END SUMMARY.

2. SOURCES WHO OBSERVED INTERMENT DECEMBER 8 DESCRIBE CEREMONY AS FESTIVE, IMPRESSIVE, AND ORDERLY, WITH HUGE CROWD PRESENT (POLICE ESTIMATE 20,000 BUT THIS IS PROBABLY TOO LOW). UN,
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BUDDHIST, AND "FIGHTING PEACOCK" FLAGS (LATTER IS TRADITIONALLY

ASSOCIATED WITH PREWAR NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND WITH RANGOON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS UNION) WERE FLOWN, BUT NO BURMESE FLAGS. OVER ONE HUNDRED MONKS, MANY OF THEM MIDDLE-AGED OR ELDERLY, PARTICIPATED, UNDER LEADERSHIP OF A RESPECTED NON-POLITICAL SENIOR ABBOT.

3. MEDIA TREATMENT HAS REMAINED LACONIC, AIMED AT DENIGRATING ACTIVIST LEADERS. FOR EXAMPLE, PRESS DECEMBER 9 REPORTS ONLY THAT "SOME GROUPS OF MOBbing CROWDS ENTOMBED THE BODY AGAINST THE WILL OF U THANT'S FAMILY." FAMILY MEMBERS HELD PRESS CONFERENCE AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 8 AT WHICH THEY REITERATED OPPOSITION TO INTERMENT AT CAMPUS, AND EXPRESSED REGRET THAT "SOME POLITICIANS HAD EXPLOITED U THANT'S FUNERAL FOR POLITICAL GAINS." RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, IT IS GENERALLY ASSUMED THAT THESE REMARKS WERE DICTATED BY GUB, AND SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE FAMILY WAS PLEASED BY U THANT'S BURIAL AT UNIVERSITY.

4. THIS PROPAGANDA LINE REFLECTS GUB'S INITIAL SERIOUS MISTAKE IN EVALUATING PUBLIC MOOD, AS WELL AS WHAT MAY BE A CONTINUING TENDENCY TO UNDERESTIMATE STUDENTS' WILL, ORGANIZATION, AND PUBLIC SUPPORT. ALTHOUGH LITTLE INFORMATION IS YET AVAILABLE ON VIEWS HELD WITHIN GUB, THE FEW COMMENTS WE HAVE HEARD SUGGEST THAT IT HAS BEEN HOPING FOR CONFLICTS TO DEVELOP AMONG ACTIVISTS. AN EFFORT TO ENCOURAGE BSPP MEMBERS TO MOVE ONTO CAMPUS EVENING OF DECEMBER 7 SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN AN ATTEMPT TO ENCOURAGE SUCH SPLITS. WITHIN BSPP, GOVERNMENT HAS PURSUED LINE THAT U THANT WAS UNIMPORTANT AND CONTRIBUTED LITTLE TO BURMA AND ITS REVOLUTION.

5. OBVIOUSLY THERE HAVE BEEN SOME DIFFERENCES OF OPINION AMONG STUDENTS, AS ILLUSTRATED BY INITIAL ACCEPTANCE, THEN REJECTION, OF DIVISIONAL PEOPLE'S COUNCIL OFFER OF BURIAL SITE NEAR SHWE DAGON. NEVERTHELESS, STUDENT ORGANIZATION AND LOGISTICS HAS BEEN MOST IMPRESSIVE FEATURE OF AFFAIR. THUS, AT 1800 EVENING OF DECEMBER 6, ELECTRIC POWER WAS CUT OFF IN MUCH OF CITY, PERHAPS IN HOPES OF DISRUPTING DEMONSTRATION. STUDENTS COUNTERED BY LIGHTING CANDLES, OF WHICH THEY HAD LARGE SUPPLY READY DESPITE FACT CANDLES ARE A SCARCE ITEM IN BURMA. VOLUNTEER FORCE WHICH CHECKED ADMISSION TO CAMPUS, AND PASSING CARS, FOLLOWING DISCOVERY OF BSPP INFILTRATORS, WAS ALSO WELL ORGANIZED AND DISCIPLINED.

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6. WESTERN JOURNALIST WHO WAS ON CAMPUS DECEMBER 7 AND 8, AND WHO INTERVIEWED SEVERAL ACTIVIST LEADERS, PROVIDED ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS ON STUDENT ORGANIZATION AND FEELINGS. AD HOC ORGANIZATION IS "COMMITTEE FOR A MEMORIAL TO U THANT," BUT STUDENTS INTERVIEWED CALLED IT (IN ENGLISH) SIMPLY "THE MOVEMENT." THE HALF DOZEN OR SO LEADERS INTERVIEWED, INCLUDING TWO LECTURERS AND A MIDDLE-AGED MONK, STRESSED THEIR HOPES TO BRING DOWN GOVERNMENT, CITING FAMILIAR GRIEVANCES: ECONOMIC SITUATION, ONE-PARTY RULE,

UNEMPLOYMENT OF GRADUATES. THEY WERE VEHEMENT, AS WERE SPEAKERS
AT SOME ON-CAMPUS RALLIES, IN PERSONAL DENUNCIATION OF NE WIN.

7. ACTIVIST LEADERS STRESS THAT THEIR MOVEMENT HAS NO LINKS TO
POLITICAL PARTIES OR FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, BUT SAID THEY HOPED FOR
UN "PROTECTION." (EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED LETTER, OSTENSIBLY FROM A
STUDENT, FOR TRANSMITTAL TO UNSYG, PLEADING FOR UN TROOPS.) THE
JOURNALIST WAS IMPRESSED BY STUDENTS' SINCERITY, LEADERSHIP
QUALITIES, AND ORGANIZATION, BUT FOUND THEM BADLY OUT OF TOUCH
WITH THE WORLD OUTSIDE BURMA, NAIVE, AND VAGUE AS TO FUTURE
TACTICS. THEY STRESSED NEED FOR WORKER-STUDENT-MONK COOPERATION,
APPARENTLY HOPING TO BRING ABOUT RENEWAL OF MAY-JUNE STRIKES, BUT
HAD NO CLEAR IDEA OF HOW GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE TOPPLED EXCEPT
FOR CONCEPT OF SPONTANEOUS MASS UPRISING.

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P 091100Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8896

INFO USMISSION USUN PRIORITY

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD: PASS AMBASSADOR OSBORN

8. AS OF AFTERNOON DECEMBER 9, POPULAR TURNOUT AT UNIVERSITY
REMAINED SIZEABLE BUT WELL BELOW THAT OF THE WEEKEND. WE HAVE
REPORTS THAT ARMY TROOPS ARE NOW OCCASIONALLY SEEN IN VICINITY
OF UNIVERSITY AND THAT THOSE CONTRIBUTING FOOD FOR THE STUDENTS
ARE BEING DETAINED BY AUTHORITIES. GUB MAY PURSUE ITS POLITY OF
NON-CONFRONTATION WHILE MOVING IN SLOWLY AS POPULAR INTEREST
RECEDES AND ONLY HARD CORE OF ACTIVISTS REMAIN. VIOLENCE CANNOT

BE RULED OUT, HOWEVER, AS SOME STUDENTS HAVE ALLEGEDLY VOWED TO RESIST TO THE END ATTEMPTS TO REMOVE U THANT'S REMAINS.

9. COMMENT: GUB'S CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO SITUATION MAY OFFSET SOMEWHAT ITS INITIAL BLUNDERS IN UNDERESTIMATING POPULAR FEELING AND OFFERING STUDENTS A UNIQUE VEHICLE TO MARSHAL ANTI-REGIME FEELING. CARE HAS BEEN TAKEN, THUS FAR AT LEAST, TO AVOID CLASHES THAT COULD PRODUCE MARTYRS AND EXTENSIVE DISORDERS. BY PERMITTING BURIAL TO PROCEED WITHOUT INTERRUPTION, GUB DEFUSED A SITUATION THAT COULD EASILY HAVE GOTTEN OUT OF HAND, AND WITH U THANT INTERRED THE STUDENTS HAVE LOST THE BROAD POPULAR BASE WHICH GAVE THEM SOME PROTECTION AGAINST GOVERNMENT ACTION. THUS THEIR OBJECTIVES NOW SEEM TO CENTER ON THE HOPE THAT THE REGIME WILL SOMEHOW COLLAPSE ON ITS OWN, OR ON WISTFUL CALLS FOR HELP FROM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOME OUTSIDE FORCE SUCH AS UN. NONETHELESS, GUB'S REPUTATION FOR POLITICAL ASTUTENESS HAS BEEN TARNISHED IN THE PAST WEEK BY THE EFFECTIVENESS, AT LEAST ON THIS OCCASION, OF MASSIVE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.
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